DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 004 PS 018 078

AUTHOR Melson, Gail F.; And Others
TITLE How Mothers Explain Their Role in Fostering Their Children's Learning: An Attributional Analysis.
PUB DATE Apr 89
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Kansas City, MO, April 27-30, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attribution Theory; *Cognitive Development; Difficulty Level; Individual Development; *Mothers; *Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent Influence; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Socialization

ABSTRACT

Goals of this study were to: (1) assess mothers' perceptions of their role in fostering their preschooler's cognitive learning; (2) examine attributions used by mothers to explain why they experience ease or difficulty helping their preschooler learn; and (3) relate maternal perceived level of ease/difficulty to attributions for the reasons underlying ease or difficulty in the fostering role. Subject were 69 mothers of preschool children who were 3 years of age or older. Each interviewed mother completed a demographic information sheet and three measures: a Perceived Ease/Difficulty at Cognitive Tasks Measure, a checklist for Attributions for Cognitive Task Difficulty, and a checklist of Attributions for Cognitive Task Ease. Findings indicated that the sample of mothers generally viewed the task of fostering their child's learning as a relatively easy one. As predicted, different attributions were invoked to explain situations in which helping the child to learn was easy or difficult. In general, mothers endorsed more attributions for easy than for difficult situations. They tended to attribute difficult situations to parent or unstable causes and easy situations to child and stable causes. In particular, stable child causes as sources of task difficulty were avoided. Systematic group differences were found between mothers perceiving ease and those perceiving difficulty in helping their child learn. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED308004

How mothers explain their role in fostering their children's learning: An attributional analysis

Gail F. Melson*, Anne McVey and Gary Ladd

Purdue University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Gail F. Melson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 017878

*Address all correspondence to the first author at Department of Child Development and Family Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

Paper presented at the biennial meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, Kansas City, MO, April, 1989.

As recent attention has focussed on the determinants of parenting (Belsky, 1984), the role of parents' cognitive constructions of child-rearing and the parenting process increasingly has been studied. Parental beliefs about child development have been shown to both indirectly (through parenting behaviors) and directly influence child outcomes (McGillicudy-DeLisi, 1985). Most research has focussed on beliefs about the child, particularly the child's cognitive development (Miller, 1988), with relatively little attention paid to parental ideas about aspects of parenting itself.

A dimension of the parent role that has been theoretically and empirically linked to children's cognitive development is that of the parent as teacher or facilitator of the child's learning (Sigel, 1985; McGillicudy-DeLisi, 1985). Ladd and Price (1986) found that perceived difficulty in fostering cognitive development was greatest among parents of 3rd to 5th graders whose cognitive competence was lowest. The importance of the parent as facilitator of cognitive development, particularly during early childhood before the onset of formal schooling, has been underscored. During the preschool years, parents, especially mothers, are involved in helping their child learn both specific (counting) and general cognitive skills (remembering). Little is known, however, about how parents of preschoolers perceive this role. Specifically, to what extent do parents view facilitating their preschool child's learning as an easy or difficult socialization task?

A second important question concerns the process by which parents construct their beliefs about socialization tasks such as fostering cognitive development. How do parents explain the reasons for perceived ease or difficulty of socialization tasks? Attribution theory centers around explanations individuals make for their own and others' behaviors. There is evidence that parents function as "naive psychologists", seeking patterns of regularity and stability underlying their child-rearing experiences (Holden & West, 1983). With respect to children's learning, parental attributions have been shown to be more predictive of children's achievement and self-perceptions than classroom climate or the child's own record of achievement (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1982; Phillips, 1987). Parental inferences about the role of parents as facilitators of children's cognitive development may have important socializing functions, leading to different teaching strategies, behaviors or environments that may have differential impact on the child's learning. For example, self-attributions based on ability have been shown to be less susceptible to further action than those based on effort (Dweck & Goetz, 1978). This suggests that parents who attribute difficulty in helping their child learn to the child's innate lack of ability may employ different (or fewer) teaching strategies than may parents who employ effort attributions for such difficulties.

Thus, the primary aims of this study were to (1) examine maternal beliefs about the ease or difficulty of their role in "helping their child learn" and (2) relate such beliefs to the attributions made concerning the reasons for ease or difficulty.

Models of the attribution process:

Based on Weiner's (1980) model of attribution dimensions and Dix and Grusec's (1985) attributional model of socialization, we conceptualized an attributional model as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model of attributions for parenting tasks

EASE	DIFFICULTY
PARENT	CHILD
Internal	
Stable	
Unstable	
External	
Stable	
Unstable	

The first step of the attributional model is the distinction between situations in which parents perceive it to be easy vs difficult to facilitate their child's learning. We suggest that such evaluations may be somewhat analogous to "success" vs "failure" outcomes described by attribution theory and shown to give rise to different attributional processes. However, "success/failure" attributions suggest evaluation of outcomes, while ease/difficulty attributions are related to evaluation of process. We argue that since parents perceive and experience socialization as an ongoing, dynamically changing, open-ended process, attributions based on process are more ecologically valid than those based on outcomes. Therefore, parental attributions concerning "ease" vs "difficulty" in helping their child learn are assessed, rather than "success" vs "failure" outcomes.

The attribution literature suggests that individuals construct different explanations for their successes vs failures. The "positivity bias" results in more internal attributions for success and more external attributions for failure. With respect to attributions concerning children, there is evidence that mothers are more likely to attribute positive social behaviors to internal causes, negative social behaviors to external causes (Gretarrson & Gelfand, 1988). Consistent with the positivity bias, mothers may tend to attribute their ease in fostering cognitive development to internal characteristics of the child but difficulty to parent or other environmental characteristics.

In the second step, after perceiving the process of helping the child learn as easy or difficult, the parent is hypothesized to make inferences about the locus of causation as parent-centered and/or child-centered. For example, as an explanation of why it is easy for a parent to help their child learn, "I have a teaching style that matches the way my child learns" is parent-centered, while "My child learns these things more quickly than most children" is child-centered.

Moreover, both parent and child causes may be distinguished along the dimensions of internality and externality. Internal causes are inferred from statements that the actor (parent or child) has the ability (or lack of ability) to bring about the situation, the desire or the knowledge that certain actions will lead to the specified situation. For example, "I know the best way to teach my child" would reflect internality on the part of the parent, while "My child usually finds learning easy" would reflect internality on the part of the child. External causes are inferred from placing the locus of cause outside the actor in the actor's environment.

When examining parent-child relations, the concept of internal and external attributions may be confusing, since when parents attribute causes to something about the child, this is external to the parent but internal to the child. To avoid confusion and to bring greater conceptual clarity to our model, we distinguished between two types of external causes. Those external to the parent include aspects of the parental environment such as work, schedules and friends, with whom the parent is in direct contact, but with whom the child generally is in indirect contact. For example, "My schedule usually allows enough time for me to work with my child" would reflect an attribution based on the parent's external environment. Similarly, attributions external to the child include the child's teachers and school environment where parents participate indirectly for the most part. An example of an attribution based on the child's external environment is: "My child has a good learning environment at school." Thus, external parent causes reflect the parental microsystem but the child's mesosystem, while external child causes reflect the child's microsystem and the parental mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This conceptualization permits a more differentiated description of external attributions in parent-child relations (Booth, et al, 1986).

A third aspect of attributions is stability/instability, reflecting the degree to which a cause is perceived to be enduring vs volatile over time and situation. Stability is inferred from attributions concerning usual or persistent states, for example "I usually feel I have the approach my child needs". Instability is inferred from attributions reflecting non-enduring states that occur only sometimes, for example, "I sometimes persist when things don't go well [in helping my child learn]" or that may be attributed to luck, for example, "My child seems to have good luck with some learning tasks."

An important component of the attribution model used in the present study is the conceptualization of these three aspects -- parent-centered/child-centered, internal/external and stable/unstable -- not as three bipolar dimensions but 6 conceptually distinct dimensions. Thus, parents may explain their ease or difficulty in fostering child learning in terms of parent and child-centered causes, or in terms of both internal and external causes, etc. to varying degrees. This is in keeping with findings that parent beliefs about child development are interactionist, dynamic and complex (Miller, 1988).

Research questions:

Using the model of parental attributions outlined above, we examined patterns of attributions for two groups of mothers; those who reported that fostering their child's learning was easy and those who reported some difficulty in this area. Specifically, we asked the following questions:

(1) Do mothers vary in how they perceive their role as facilitators of their preschoolers' learning? How easy/difficult do mothers generally view this role?

(2) What attributions do mothers make for hypothetical situations of ease and of difficulty in fostering their child's learning? Do attributions vary by ease/difficulty of situation?

(3) Are mothers' general perceptions of their role as facilitators of their child's learning related to their attributions about why this process is easy or difficult? Do mothers who view this role as generally an easy one make different attributions concerning causes of ease or difficulty than do mothers who generally find some difficulty in this role?

METHOD

Subjects:

Sixty-nine mothers each of whom had a target preschool child (mean age = 4 yrs, SD = 9 mons., range = 2 years 9 months to 6 yrs 5 mons) participated in the study. Thirty-four of the target children were girls, 35 were boys. Maternal age ranged from 23 to 48 years (mean = 34.65 years). Sixty of the mothers were married, and most were middle-class and well educated. Average number of years of education completed was 17.41 (range = 12 to 25 years), and mean family income was reported as $38,000. One third of the mothers were employed full-time, one -third were employed part-time and one-third were not employed. Families had lived at their current address an average of 3.91 years.

Procedures and measures:

Mothers of children aged approximately 3 years or older enrolled in a university preschool and child care center were contacted and asked to participate in a study of parenting that included the measures reported here. Mothers who were non-native speakers and non-fluent in English were excluded. Over 90% of those eligible agreed to participate.

As part of an individual at-home interview, each mother completed a sheet of demographic information and three measures. The 10-item Perceived Ease/Difficulty at Cognitive Tasks Measure was adapted from an analogous instrument developed by Ladd and Price (1986) for use with parents of 3rd - 5th graders. Both measures employ the "structured alternative" format (Harter, 1982) to reduce social desirability responses. In the present measure, designed for use with parents of preschoolers, each item describes a common helping situation (Ex: "When it comes to helping my preschooler be less distracted when learning") and two contrasting perceptions: "Some parents find this an easy task" but "other parents find this a difficult task". Situation descriptions were selected to reflect general (e.g. "solve learning problems") and specific (e.g. "learn new words") cognitive skills appropriate to preschoolers. After choosing one perception, the mother indicated if it was "really true for me" or "sort of true for me". Scores could range from 10 (most easy) to 40 (most difficult). Internal reliability of the scale was indicated by Cronbach's alpha of .82.

Each mother also completed two 24-item attribution scales. The Attributions for Cognitive Task Difficulty asked the parent to consider situations "when it's difficult for me to help my child learn things (such as paying attention, remembering things, learning new words, etc.)" and then presented a checklist of 12 parent-centered and 12 child-centered explanations, randomly ordered. Half of all parent-centered items and half of all child-centered items described internal causes, while half described external causes. Similarly, half of all items described stable causes and half described unstable causes. Thus, there were 3 items describing each of every possible combination of parent/child, internal/external and stable/unstable dimensions. Items were randomly ordered. Internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha was .79.

A parallel checklist of Attributions for Cognitive Task Ease asked the parent to consider situations "when it's easy for me to help my child learn things..." and presented 24 explanations reflecting all combinations of parent/child, internal/external and stable/unstable dimensions, randonly ordered. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .73. Order of measures was counterbalanced across subjects.

RESULTS

Perceived Ease/Difficulty at Cognitive Tasks:

While scores could range from 10 (most easy) to 40 (most difficult), the actual range of scores was 9 (one respondent omitted one item) to 28 (mean = 17.79), indicating that this sample of mothers generally perceived little difficulty in fostering aspects of their preschoolers' cognitive development. A median split (<18) was used to explore whether those mothers who perceived such socialization tasks as very easy (n = 33) differed in their attributions from mothers who recognized some difficulty (n = 34). Two mothers were dropped from analysis because of incomplete data.

Effects of Perceived Ease/Difficulty on Attributions:

Means, standard deviations and ranges of scores for each attribution dimension by group are presented in Table 1. A Group (2) x Task Ease/Difficulty (2) x Parent/Child Centered (2) x Internality/Externality (2) Repeated Measures MANOVA was used to test whether mothers who generally found helping their child learn very easy (Group I) differed in attributions from those who generally found some difficulty with this socialization task (Group II). Group was the between factor while the other variables were within factors. For clarity of interpretation, a separate Group x Task x Parent/Child x Stability/Instability MANOVA was used to examine the role of stability/instability attributions. Univariate and Scheffe tests of mean differences were used to examine significant effects, and tests of simple main effects and posthoc tests on means were used to dismantle significant interactions.

MANOVA results are presented in Table 2. The main effect for Task Ease/Difficulty reflected the tendency for mothers to endorse more attributions for situations when they find it easy to help their child learn (M = 18.07) as compared to situations when they find it difficult to help their child learn (M = 9.02). The main effect for Stability/Instability indicated that more unstable attributions (M = 16.35) were endorsed than stable attributions (M = 10.74).

These main effects were qualified by two-way, three-way and one four-way interaction. To clarify interpretation, two-way interactions will be discussed first, with higher order interactions shown in figures. The Group x Task interaction indicated that Group I mothers (those who found helping their child learn quite easy) endorsed significantly more attributions for ease (M = 19.79) and fewer attributions for difficulty (M = 6.97) than did Group II mothers (who generally reported some difficulty in helping their child learn) (M = 16.40 ease; 11.01 difficulty). The Task x Parent/Child Centered interaction reflected the tendency for both groups of mothers to endorse more child- than parent-centered reasons for ease in helping the child learn (M = 10.07 child; 8.00 parent) but more parent- than child-centered reasons for difficulty (M = 3.46 child; 5.57 parent). The Task x Internality/Externality interaction indicated that when mothers explain ease they employ more external (to both parent and child) attributions (M = 9.37) than internal attributions (M = 8.70), but do not differ on Internality/Externality in explaining difficulty (M = 4.32 external; 4.70 internal). Finally, the Task x Stability/Instability interaction indicated that perceived difficulty in helping the child learn was attributed more to unstable causes (M = 6.86) than to stable ones (M = 2.16) while attributions for perceived ease did not differ significantly (M = 9.49 unstable; 8.58 stable).

These interactions were in turn qualified by a number of three-way interactions. The Group x Task x Parent/Child interaction (Figure 2) indicated that Group I as compared to Group II mothers attributed task ease more to parent causes but task difficulty more to child causes. Similarly, the Group x Task x Internality/Externality interaction indicated that Group I mothers on the average saw task ease as due more to internal than to external causes, while Group II mothers attributed task difficulty more to internal than external causes (Figure 3). Finally, the Group x Parent/Child x Internality/Externality interaction (Figure 4) reflected the tendency for Group II but not Group I mothers to view parent causes as external but child causes as internal. Finally, the Task x Parent/Child x Stability/Instability interaction (Figure 5) indicated that in situations of perceived difficulty, mothers appear to avoid attributions about stable child causes. If a child cause is chosen as explanation, it is more likely to be an unstable attribution. When stable causes of difficulty are endorsed, they are more likely to be sources of parent stability. In situations of perceived ease, however, attributions about stable and unstable child or parent causes do not differ. This latter three-way interaction was further qualified by a four-way interaction involving Group (Figure 6). On the average, Group II mothers (who find some difficulty in helping their child learn) attribute difficult situations more to parent stability and child instability than do Group I mothers. By contrast, for easy situations, Group I mothers endorse more stable parent attributions.

DISCUSSION

The goals of this study were to (1) assess mothers' perceptions of their role in fostering their preschooler's cognitive learning; (2) to examine attributions used by mothers to explain why they experience ease or difficulty helping their preschooler learn; and (3) to relate maternal perceived level of ease/difficulty to attributions for the reasons underlying ease or difficulty in this role.

Mothers' perceived ease/difficulty in helping their child learn:

The sample of mothers studied generally viewed the socialization task of fostering their child's learning as a relatively easy one. This is not surprising considering the economically and educationally advantaged status of most of the mothers. Such high status has been related to feelings of self-efficacy and self-confidence, which in turn is positively associated with perceptions of task ease (Bandura, 1977).

Perceptions of the ease or difficulty of fostering aspects of children's competence have been related to measures of cognitive achievement among elementary schoolage children (Ladd & Price, 1986). This suggests that the relatively high perceived ease in helping the child learn reported by this sample may be related to the children's cognitive competence as measured on standardized instruments such as the Peabody Preschool Vocabulary Test or the Preschool Inventory. Other data collected as part of this project will allow us to test this hypothesis.

Attributions used to explain ease and difficulty in fostering preschool learning:

Consistent with attribution theory and the model proposed here, mothers differentiated among the dimensions of attribution selected for study. As predicted, different attributions were invoked to explain situations when helping child learn is easy vs difficult. In general, mothers endorsed more attributions for easy than for difficult situations. If one assumes that easy situations are viewed as positive and difficult situations as negative, this appears inconsistent with the attribution theory prediction (Weiner, 1980) that the search for explanation is activated by negative or unexpected outcomes. However, attributions concerning both the parenting process and child development may not follow the same pattern found for outcomes to the self. Parents may be assumed to be highly emotionally and cognitively invested in their socialization role, interested as much in why things are going well as poorly for the child and parent. Since the mothers in this sample generally report more experiences of ease than difficulty in helping their child learn, they have had more opportunity to reflect upon reasons for task ease than task difficulty.

Evidence for the positivity bias was found in the tendency for mothers to attribute difficult situations more to parent or unstable causes and easy situations more to child and stable causes. In particular, stable child causes as sources of task difficulty were avoided. Examples of such items include: "My child doesn't learn these things as quickly as most children."; "My child tends to learn more slowly."; "My child never seems to get enough time from the teacher"; and "My child is not given a good learning environment at school." These results are consistent with Gretarrson & Gelfand's (1988) findings that positive social behaviors are attributed more to stable child causes, while negative social behaviors are attributed more to unstable external causes. As Miller (1988) suggests, the positivity bias may have functional socialization value for children's development. To the extent that parents view difficulties in helping the child learn as stemming from changeable parent-centered causes, they may be more motivated to persist in helping the child. Moreover, they may communicate to the child directly or indirectly such attributions, influencing the child's self-attributions for success or failure at

cognitive tasks. Further research is needed linking parental attributions for task ease and difficulty both to parent teaching strategies and children's attributions for the same situations.

Relations between perceived ease in helping the child learn and attributions:

Although the sample was one that generally did not report much difficulty in the socialization tasks related to helping their preschooler develop cognitively, a range of responses was used on the Perceived Ease/Difficulty at Cognitive Tasks measure, suggesting considerable individual variability. Moreover, when a median split was used to distinguish between mothers who perceived helping their child learn as very easy (Group I) vs those who acknowledge some difficulty in this area, (Group II), systematic group differences in attributions were found. Not surprisingly, mothers who report experiencing some difficulty endorse more attributions for difficult situations and fewer attributions for easy situations than do other mothers. This supports the hypothesis that in terms of the parenting process, mothers tend to construct explanations for for the experiences that happen to them, rather than to activate causal search only for negative or unexpected events.

Mothers who perceived some difficulty in helping their child learn (Group II) were less likely than Group I mothers to view themselves as causes for task ease but more likely to take responsibility for task difficulty. Similarly, Group II mothers attributed difficulty more to stable aspects of their parenting behavior than did Group I mothers, while the latter saw task ease as attributed more to stable parent characteristics than did Group II mothers. In general, when parent causes were endorsed, Group I mothers chose more internal causes than did Group II mothers, who chose more external causes. Finally, Group I mothers viewed task ease as more internally caused, by parent and/or child characteristics, than did Group II mothers who viewed task difficulty as more internally caused.

These findings are consistent with the view of Bandura (1977) and Heider (1958) that perception of task difficulty is inversely related to one's sense of self-efficaciousness. Although self-confidence was not directly measured, Group I mothers appear quite self-confident in terms of facilitating their children's learning. This may be because their children exhibit higher cognitive competence than do the children of Group II mothers, a possibility we will test in subsequent analyses. Another possibility is that Group I and Group II mothers may differ in their typical teaching strategies, with the former experiencing more ease. Still another possibility is mothers tend to take on personal responsibility for whatever general socialization processes they experience. Thus, mothers who see helping their preschooler learn as very easy take "credit", while mothers who find some difficulty in this take the "blame". This latter possibility may reflect the important role mothers play (and perceive they play) in all aspects of socialization, particularly before children enter formal schooling. Comparison of maternal and paternal attributions as well as comparison of parental attributions of parents of older children may shed light on this.

References

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavior change. Psychological Review, 84, 191-215.

Belsky, J. (1984). The determinants of parenting: A process model. Child Development, 55, 83 - 96.

Booth, C.L., Crnic, K.A., Mitchell, S.K. and Templeton, S. (1986). Parental attributions about child behaviors: Age-related changes during the transition years. Paper presented to the International Conference on Infant Studies, Los Angeles.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Dix, T.H. and Grusec, J.E. (1985). Parent attribution processes in the socialization of children. In I.E.Sigel (Ed.), Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children. (pp. 201 - 233). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Dweck, C.S. & Goetz, T.E. (1978). Attributions and learned helplessness. In J. Harvey, W. Ickes & R. Kidd (Eds.), New directions in attribution research. Vol. 2. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Entwisle, D. R. and Hayduk, L.A. (1982). Early schooling: Cognitive and affective outcomes. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Gretarrson, S. J.& Gelfand, D.(1988). Mothers' attributions regarding their children's social behavior and personality. Developmental Psychology, 24, 264-269.

Harter, S. (1982). The perceived competence scale for children. Child Development, 53, 87 - 97.

Heider, F. (1958). The psychology of interpersonal relations. New York: Wiley.

Holden, G. and West, M.J.(1983). The parent as naive psychologist: Analyses of parental deliberations. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Detroit, MI.

Ladd, G.W. and Price, J.M. (1986). Promoting children's cognitive and social competence: The relation between parents' perceptions of task difficulty and children's perceived and actual competence. Child Development, 57, 446 - 460.

McGillicudy-DeLisi, A.V. (1985). The relationship between parental beliefs and children's cognitive level. In I.E. Sigel (Ed.), Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children. (pp. 7 - 24). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Miller, S. A. (1988). Parents' beliefs about children's cognitive development. Child Development, 59, 259 - 285.

Phillips, D. (1987). Socialization of perceived academic competence among highly competent children. Child Development, 58, 1308 -1320.

Sigel, I. (1985) (Ed.). Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Weiner, B. (1980). A cognitive attribution-emotion-action model of motivated behavior: An analysis of judgments of help-giving. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71, 3 - 25.

Table 1

Means and standard deviations for attribution dimensions by group

Dimension	Range	Group I	Group II
Task Difficulty	0 - 24	6.97 (4.16)	11.01 (4.76)
Parent	0 - 12	4.30 (1.61)	6.79 (2.53)
Internal	0 - 6	2.06 (1.32)	3.27 (1.71)
External	0 - 6	2.24 (.87)	3.53 (1.16)
Stable	0 - 6	.97 (.77)	2.59 (1.83)
Unstable	0 - 6	3.33 (1.24)	4.21 (1.18)
Child	0 - 12	2.67 (1.49)	4.22 (2.23)
Internal	0 - 6	1.36 (1.08)	2.68 (1.32)
External	0 - 6	1.30 (.88)	1.54 (1.16)
Stable	0 - 6	.15 (.36)	.59 (1.23)
Unstable	0 - 6	2.52 (1.35)	3.63 (1.50)
Task Ease	0 - 24	19.79 (3.55)	16.40 (3.98)
Parent	0 - 12	9.18 (2.01)	6.85 (2.295)
Internal	0 - 6	4.64 (1.19)	2.91 (1.69)
External	0 - 6	4.55 (1.23)	3.94 (1.26)
Stable	0 - 6	4.30 (1.24)	2.78 (1.47)
Unstable	0 - 6	4.88 (1.08)	4.07 (1.44)
Child	0 - 12	10.61 (1.54)	9.54 (1.87)
Internal	0 - 6	5.49 (.83)	4.41 (1.54)
External	0 - 6	5.12 (1.05)	5.13 (1.03)
Stable	0 - 6	5.36 (.82)	4.74 (1.11)
Unstable	0 - 6	5.24 (1.09)	4.81 (1.24)

Table 2

Effects of Group, Task, Parent/Child Role, Internality/Externality and Stability/Instability on Attributions for "helping my child learn"

Effect	F-value	p-value
Group	.51	ns
Task	212.05	***
Parent/Child	.02	ns
Internality/Externality	.65	ns
Stability/Instability	165.16	***
Group x Task	35.39	***
Group x P/C	.21	ns
Group x I/E	3.20	ns
Group x S/Ins	.94	ns
Task x P/C	80.69	***
Task x I/E	5.97	*
Task x S/Ins	119.37	***
P/C x I/E	17.33	***
P/C x S/Ins	.73	ns
Group x Task x P/C	5.66	*
Group x Task x I/E	14.61	***
Group x Task x S/Ins	2.00	ns
Group x P/C x I/E	4.98	*
Group x P/C x S/Ins	2.45	ns
Task x P/C x I/E	1.72	ns
Task x P/C x S/Ins	24.04	***
Group x Task x P/C x I/E	1.92	ns
Group x Task x P/C x I/E	8.18	***

P/C = parent-centered/ child-centered
I/E = internality/externality
S/Ins = stability/instability

ns = non-significant *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

FIGURE 2

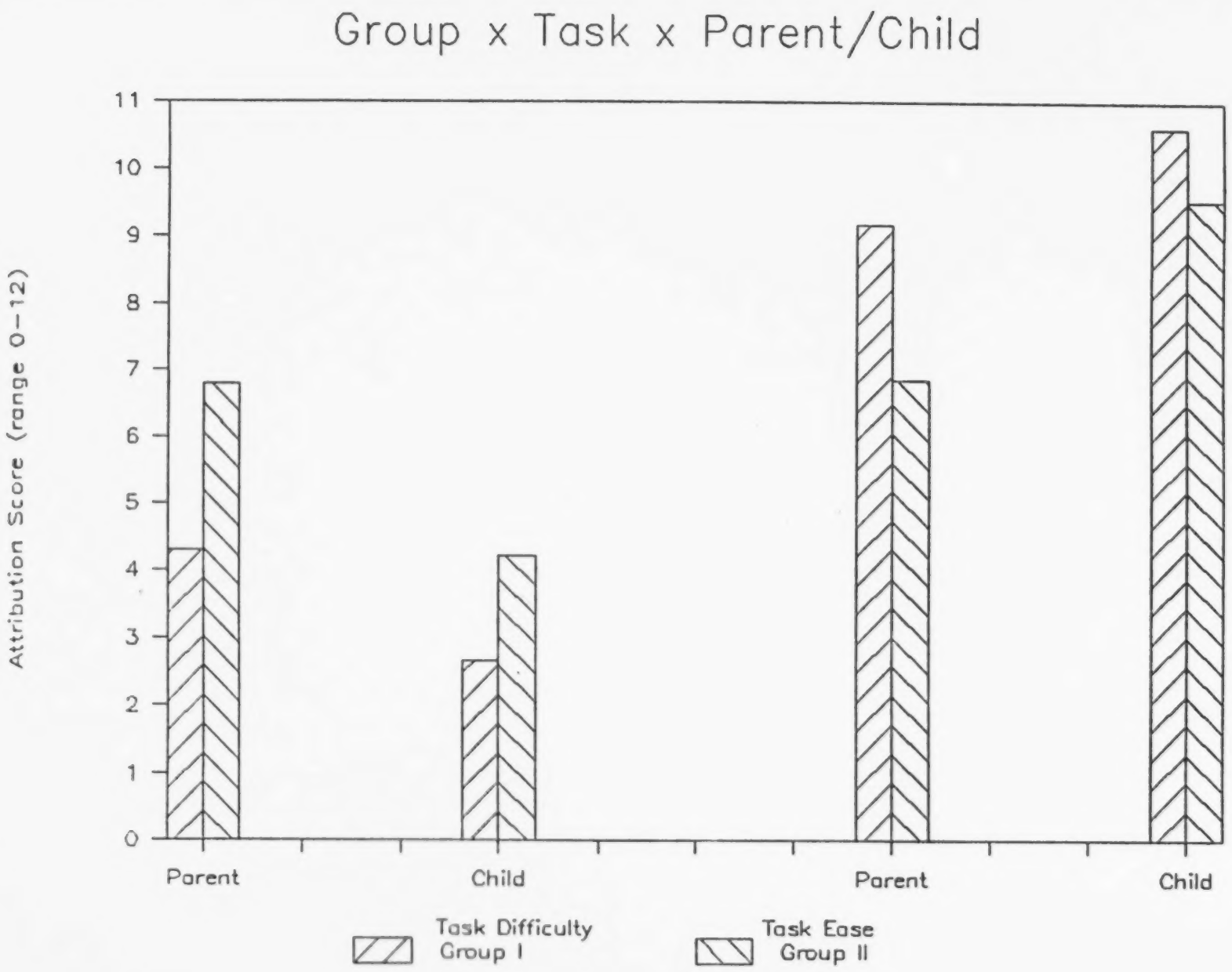
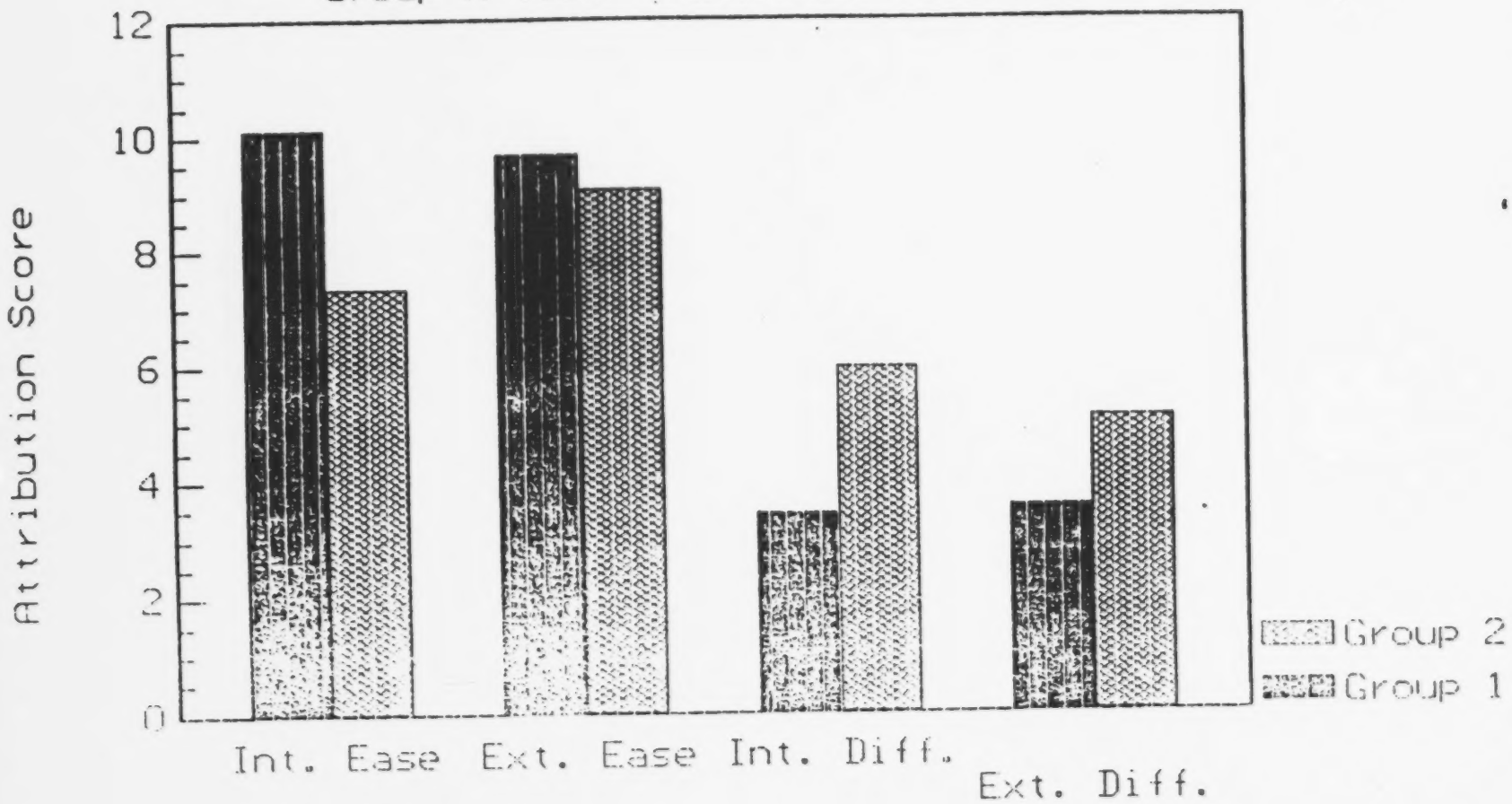

Group x Task x Parent/Child
Attribution Score (range 0-12)
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Parent
Child
Parent
Child
Task Difficulty
Group I
Task Ease
Group II

Figure 3
Group X Task X Internal/External



Int.--Internal Ext.--External

Figure 4
Group X Parent/Child X Int./Ext.

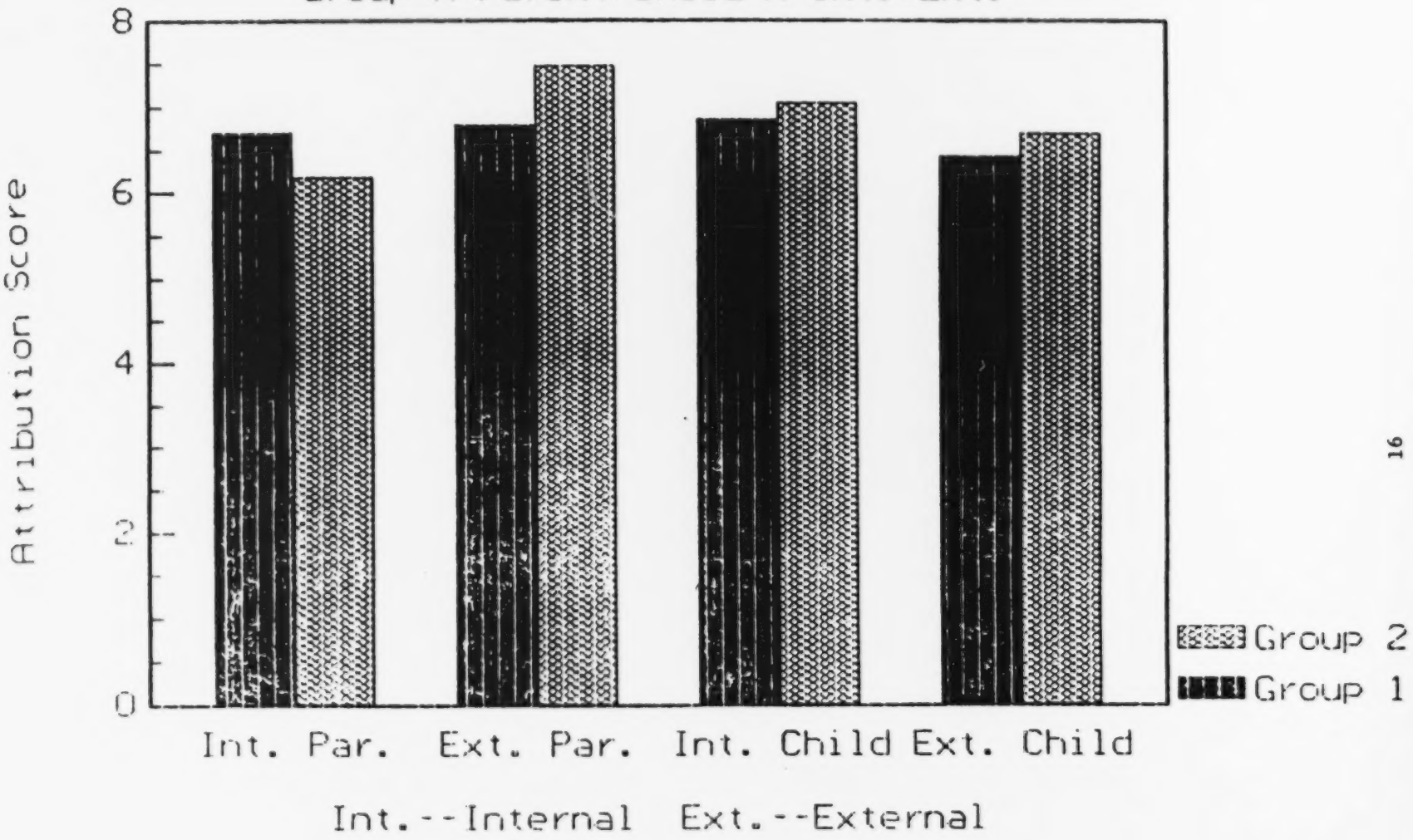


Figure 5
Group X Parent/Child X Stable/Unstable
Task Difficulty Only

Figure 5
Group X Parent/Child X Stable/Unstable
Task Ease Only